

WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report December 2005

The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

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Division News

Couple takes public transportation around the Sound for under \$40

Washington State Ferries employee John Daughters and his wife Cathy explored the Puget Sound by bus, ferry, and train. As strong advocates for public transportation, they left their car at home in Seattle and hit the road on a Metro bus. They spent the weekend sightseeing on Whidbey Island and around the Olympic Peninsula using only public transportation. With their Flex-Passes and a total of \$19.15 each, they were able to experience services provided by King County Metro, Amtrak *Cascades*, Island Transit, Washington State Ferries, Jefferson Transit, and Kitsap Transit. A highlight of their trip was visiting Skagit Transit's new multi-modal station in Mt. Vernon. To read about their adventure, please visit WSDOT's Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/news/ptr/11_18_05_transittrip.htm



Public transportation supporters visit WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail Division.

Office of Transit Mobility

WSDOT submits project list to Legislature

WSDOT will submit a prioritized list of Regional Mobility projects to the Washington State Legislature this month. The department received applications for 43 projects totaling more than \$51 million in requests. The role of the Office of Transit Mobility (OTM) is to identify cost effective projects that reduce delay and improve connectivity between counties and regional centers. The Legislature will make final awarding of grants in the 2006-07 Supplemental Budget.

Two working groups assisted WSDOT in the prioritization of project proposals: OTM Advisory Committee and the Grant Technical Work Group. The proposals were evaluated based on their impact to the transportation system, probability of implementation as well as other published criteria. The two groups ranked projects into three categories: high, medium and low. Staff then conducted a review to ensure all projects were assessed with the same rigor.



The OTM Grant Technical Work Group met to review the 43 applications for Regional Mobility Grants.

The goal was to build a program that was transparent, administered fairly and where participants have a voice in the process. The advisory committee worked hard to accomplish this goal. The grant program is funded at \$20 million in 2005–07 and \$40 million in the following biennia.

A list of the projects, including a map showing the locations of the proposals, is available on the OTM Web site: www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/otm/2005-07_regmob_applications.cfm

Public Transportation

Mark your calendar for WSDOT's 30th Annual Public Transportation Conference & Expo

After careful review of potential locations and facilities for next year's Conference, WSDOT has selected the Doubletree Hotel in Bellevue to host the event, August 14–16, 2006.

WSDOT's Public Transportation Conference & Expo, celebrating its 30th anniversary next year, is an annual gathering and interactive forum for those providing or supporting public transportation in Washington State.



The 2006 Conference will be held in Bellevue, Washington

Attendees include public transportation providers, planners, and advocates as well as consulting firms, civic leaders, and suppliers of public transportation related products and services. Look for more information on our Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference.

WSDOT participates in association membership meetings

WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail (PT&R) division regularly collaborates with public transportation associations to provide information about our programs and gather feedback from members. Recently, WSDOT staff participated in two association meetings:

- The Community Transportation Association of the Northwest (CTA-NW) held a general membership meeting on November 4 at the University of Washington Tacoma Campus. Judy Giniger, PT&R Director, spoke about the Office of Transit Mobility and the new Regional Mobility Grant program. Cathy Silins, Public Transportation and Commute Options Manager, presented a discussion paper for evaluating program effectiveness and funding distribution of the state's public transportation grants.
- The Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) held their annual meeting on November 8 and 9 at Kitsap Transit in Bremerton. WSTA members, including Judy Giniger and Cathy Silins, discussed the association's role, legislative agenda, and services for their members, and also elected the 2005 Board of Directors.

Columbia County residents vote to fund local public transportation



Voters in Columbia County approved a 0.4 sales tax to fund public transportation.

On November 8, local voters approved a 0.4 percent sales tax to help operate Columbia County Public Transportation (CCPT). The tax will give the state's newest transit system a stable source of funding and will allow CCPT to operate at current levels of service. The tax will also help CCPT provide the local matching funds required for a \$281,576 federal grant awarded through WSDOT's public transportation grants program.

CCPT became eligible to levy a local sales tax after forming an official transit system earlier this year. Ridership for CCPT has grown from an average of 923 trips per month in 2001 to an average of 2,499 trips per month in 2005.

WSDOT gathers feedback for Intercity Plan



WSDOT is gathering input for the Washington State Intercity & Rural-to-Urban Public Transportation Network Plan. This plan will guide the development of intercity public transportation services that link cities and towns throughout Washington, including connections between modes (that is, bus, passenger rail, ferries, and air services) and from rural areas and small towns to the greater network of intercity services.

Now through January, WSDOT is interviewing current and potential intercity public transportation providers and surveying individuals and organizations with interests in intercity public transportation. Following the initial needs assessment, WSDOT will host a number of regional meetings to discuss project findings and involve the public in the planning process.

To learn more about the project, go to the Intercity Bus tab located on WSDOT's Public Transportation home page at www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit. As the project gets underway, look for the online survey, project news, draft documents, maps, and meeting announcements. To speak to someone directly about this project or other intercity and rural public transportation issues, contact Daniel Wayne, Intercity and Rural Specialist at 360-705-7909 or wayned@wsdot.wa.gov.

Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

CTAA grant provides technical assistance to transportation providers

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) plans to continue—and expand—funding for a technical assistance program in Washington State.

CTAA's Executive Director, Dale Marsico, recently met with members of CTA-NorthWest and the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) to discuss the programs.

Dale explained that CTAA is pleased with the results from the \$150,000 invested in 2003-2005 and plans to award \$200,000 to continue the program in 2005-2007. The funding will be matched with state and local funding to assist transportation providers with a variety of projects. Look for more information and a call for project proposals on the ACCT Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct.

ACCT demonstrates test framework for statewide Travel Options Web site

ACCT is looking for your feedback on a "wireframe" of the statewide Travel Options Web site, a tool that will help travelers and transit advocates find online transportation information to build their own trips. The "wireframe" is a test site showing sample screens to simulate the function of the first phase of the Travel Options Web site. It represents a stripped down, no graphics design and is available at <http://dev.pacificintermedia.com/WAPages/CityToCityEntry.aspx>.

ACCT staff held focus group meetings in Portland, Olympia, Seattle, and the Tri-Cities in November to start gathering feedback. People provided their opinions on how it works, potential flaws, suggestions for better terminology, and priorities for adding tools in the future. ACCT then published a summary of comments received on its Web site. To get involved in the early stages and provide your input, complete an online survey at www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct or contact Marcy Jaffe, ACCT Outreach Liaison, ACCT, at jaffem@wsdot.wa.gov or 360-705 7923.

Passenger Rail

Mount Vernon Station – One Year Later

In September 2004, Amtrak *Cascades* began stopping at Skagit Station, the newest train station in Washington. Skagit Station, located in the heart of downtown Mount Vernon, reinforces the axiom that the quality of a train station has a direct relationship to its use by the traveling public.



Before the new Mount Vernon Station was built, passengers waited in a bus shelter next to the tracks

Mount Vernon's previous station consisted of a small bus shelter and a portable restroom. The new station has a heated, indoor waiting area; restrooms; an espresso cart; a large, well-lit parking lot; and connections to local and regional transit.

WSDOT and Amtrak annually measure the volumes of people using each train station served by Amtrak *Cascades*. While the train schedules and levels of daily service have remained unchanged, passenger volumes at the Mount Vernon station increased by nearly 19 percent over the previous year. Passengers are taking advantage of the station, its conveniences, and the connections to Skagit Transit (SKAT) bus service.



Today passengers waiting for trains have a warm, comfortable station, with several amenities and connections to local transit.

Amtrak *Cascades* supports Holiday Open Houses



Visitors to last year's Holiday Open House at the Edmonds Amtrak Station met with Santa and Mrs. Claus, while Marines collected donations for "Toys for Tots."

Amtrak *Cascades* is supporting Holiday Open Houses at four stations along the route—Bellingham, Edmonds, Seattle, Kelso, and Portland, Oregon. The open houses are hosted by individual Amtrak stations and community groups, including the Marine Corps "Toys for Tots," Northwest Second Harvest, Sunshine Division Food Bank, Washington Association of Rail Passengers, and Operation Lifesaver.

Visitors who donate a new, unwrapped toy, canned food items, or a new item of children's clothing can receive an Amtrak *Cascades* coupon that allows them to bring a friend for free.

Model railroad clubs often have displays at the open houses, refreshments are available at some sites, and Santa Claus makes appearances at selected cities. For more information about this year's Holiday Open Houses, visit the [Amtrak *Cascades*](http://www.amtrakcascades.com) Web site.

Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management

Project proposals received for 2005–2007 Trip Reduction Performance Program

WSDOT received 31 proposals requesting Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) funding for projects ranging in size from \$6,300 to over \$400,000. The program is open to entrepreneurs, private companies, transit systems, cities, or non-profit organizations and was funded at \$1.5 million for 2005–2007.

More than 75 people attended TRPP trainings conducted November 2–8 in Spokane, Bothell, and Lacey. In addition, the program manager attended TRPP meetings in Vancouver and Olympia, and participated in conference calls to Skagit County and the city of Camas in Clark County. Individuals have also received assistance developing their proposals by phone and email.

Members of the Commute Trip Reduction Task Force, local agency representatives, and employer representatives supported by WSDOT staff, will review and select project proposals during December and early January. Winning projects will be announced on January 16.

Vanpool Brokerage Program supports rapid vanpool growth



An innovative brokerage program developed by WSDOT and vanpool operators fills short-term needs for vans while operators wait for new equipment to arrive. Seventeen transit agencies in the state operate vanpool programs. WSDOT acts as a broker to make one agency's unused equipment—older vehicles waiting to be sold—available to another agency that lacks a vehicle to serve new riders.

Establishing the brokerage program required developing a contract for vehicle use, negotiating fees, and working out a system for transporting the vehicles. King County Metro, Community Transit, and Island Transit made vans available to agencies throughout the state in the 2003–2005 biennium. Six transit agencies met customer needs immediately by taking advantage of this program. Currently, King County Metro is making vans available to four transit agencies.

“Everybody wins with this unique and efficient program,” commented Dave Roderick, Vanpool Manager for Ben Franklin Transit. “The Brokerage Program is an essential tool for handling vanpool growth in both urban and rural areas because it allows transit agencies to meet customer needs upon demand. The brokerage program should be shared and promoted as a national model of agencies sharing assets on a real-time basis.”

CTR supports Fall 2005 commute options promotional campaigns



your trip, your way.

In October nearly 24,000 people participated in promotional campaigns to increase the use of commute options. The participants avoided driving nearly three million miles on Washington State roadways and emitting 150,000 pounds of carbon monoxide into our air.

Amtrak *Cascades* is a major partner in the fall [campaign](#), donating 27,000 free-companion coupons. WSDOT supported the campaigns by purchasing radio advertising. In Spokane's [campaign](#), the county's Commute Trip Reduction staff worked with Clear Channel Radio to develop local promotions in which Applebee's restaurants and Motion Auto Supply stores hosted events emphasizing air quality.

CTR Task Force submits Legislative proposal to Governor

On November 21, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force submitted its final CTR efficiency proposal to Governor Gregoire for consideration as executive request legislation. The proposal, to be considered during the 2006 legislative session, recommends changes to the CTR law to make the program more effective, efficient, flexible, and integrated with other transportation and land use decisions.

Discussions with cities, counties, regional transportation planning organizations, transit agencies, and other groups helped the Task Force shape its proposal over the summer and fall.

Also on November 21, the Task Force finalized recommendations on program funding and the integration of transportation demand management policies into state transportation programs.

Announcements

Rebeca Potasnik joins ACCT team



Rebeca Potasnik is ACCT's new Program Analyst. Rebeca is responsible for ACCT's performance measures report, data collection, and assisting with outreach for the state's travel options Web site. Originally from Michigan, Rebeca spent the last 13 years in Washington and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from The Evergreen State College. She is working on her thesis project, a needs assessment of Thurston County's low-income population, and expects to receive her Masters of Community and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon in December. Rebeca can be reached at PotasnR@wsdot.wa.gov or 360-705-7917.

Local companies named as Best Workplaces for Commuters

Three Puget Sound-area companies—Boeing, Microsoft, and Safeco—are among the Fortune 500 firms that made the Environmental Protection Agency's 2005 list of the Top 20 "[Best Workplaces for Consumers](#)."

Upcoming Events

Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

Friday, February 3, April 7, June 2, August 4, October 6, and December 1, 2006
9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

To confirm time and location, visit: www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm

WSDOT's 30th Annual Public Transportation Conference and Expo

Monday, August 14–Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Doubletree Hotel Bellevue

Bellevue, Washington

For more information, contact Dan Wayne at 360-705-7909 or wayned@wsdot.wa.gov.

17th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference

Sunday, October 22–Wednesday, October 25, 2006

Skamania Lodge and Conference Center

Stevenson, Washington

For more information, contact Robin Phillips at 360-705-7929 or phillir@wsdot.wa.gov.

The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter and publishes it on our Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/ptr_newsletter/default.cfm as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. For questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at buellt@wsdot.wa.gov or 360-705-7439. To receive email announcements when new issues are published, please send a blank email message to ptr-news-join@lists.wsdot.wa.gov